Potential of tourism in North East

431. SHRI N.K. SINGH: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Northern Eastern part of our country presents considerable potential from tourists' point of view;

(b) whether necessary infrastructure like adequate budget and luxurious hotels are still not available, for example Government Sector hotels like Ashok available in Shillong are poorly managed; and

(c) if so, the steps Government has taken to provide necessary infrastructure before launching its advertisement campaigns recently?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Under the scheme of Product/ Infrastructure Development for Destinations and Circuits, Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance for infrastructure development including Budget accommodation in the North Eastern States. Hotel industries are also entitled for a Capital Investment Subsidy to the tune of 30% for Hotels (Not below Two star category) under the North East Industrial Investment Promotion Policy (NEIIPP), 2007.

ITDC does not have any hotel in Shillong. However, ITDC has two joint venture hotels *viz*. Hotel Brahmaputra Ashok at Guwahati, Assam and Hotel Donyi Polo Ashok at Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh and both the hotels are making operating profits.

The Ministry of Tourism, has sanctioned Rs.16962.56 lakh and Rs.14499.37 lakh for the North Eastern States for infrastructure development including budget accommodation in the years 2007-08 and 2008-09 respectively.

Tourism projects in Gujarat

432. SHRI NATUJI HALAJI THAKOR: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) how many tourism projects have been received by the Central Government so far from Gujarat State for grant of Central Financial Assistance;

(b) the tourism projects considered for Central Financial Assistance till date, indicating the amount of assistance granted to each project;

(c) the tourism projects which are under consideration of Government for financial assistance to Gujarat during the year 2008-09; and

(d) the period by which the financial assistance would be released?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (d) The development and promotion of places of tourist interest is primarily undertaken by the State Governments themselves. However, Ministry of Tourism provides funds on the basis of projects prioritized in consultation with the State Governments under various schemes.

The following projects which were complete as per guidelines have so far been sanctioned to the State of Gujarat during 2008-09:

(i) Infrastructure and destination development at Champaner-Pavagadh in Gujarat for Rs.360.00 lakh.

(ii) Destination development of Tarnetar District Surendra Nagar, Gujarat for Rs.310.60 lakh

(iii) Integrated development of Duarka-Nageshwar-Bet Dwarka as a major tourist Circuit in Gujarat for Rs.798.90 lakh.

(iv) Integrated development of tourist facilities at Ambaji in Gujarat for Rs.353.94 lakh.

Identification of tourist places in country

433. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has identified 20 top tourist destinations in the country with an eye for wooing the potential foreign and domestic tourists; and

(b) if so, what are the steps Government is considering to take to implement the programme?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) Ministry of Tourism has so far identified 22 mega destinations/circuits on the basis of tourism related data on domestic and foreign tourist visits, future potential and in consultation with State Governments/ Union Territory Administrations. Projects for development of tourist infrastructure at 15 of these mega destinations/circuits have also been sanctioned. Ministry of Tourism also co-ordinates with other Ministries such as Railways, Civil Aviation, Road Transport and Highways, and Urban Development etc. to achieve synergy with development programmes of these Ministries, for integrated and holistic development of tourist destinations and circuits.

Renovation of churches in Goa

434. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has undertaken renovation/beautification of churches in Goa;

(b) if so, the name of the project/scheme under which renovation/beautification has been undertaken and the cost involved in each case;

(c) by what date the work is scheduled to be completed;

(d) the agency through which the work is being executed; and

(e) the details of the work done, so far in each case?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (e) During the last five years an expenditure of Rs. 400.68 lakh has been incurred by Goa Circle of Archaeological Survey of India on renovation and upgradation of churches and convents in Goa which are under World Heritage. These works are implemented by Archaeological Survey of India on an ongoing basis as per Archaeological norms.